Baillie Life

Baillie Life, Work

(a scrapbook)

Scrapbook made by Timoleon Wilkins

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480 Potrero Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 558-8129

Cinematheque Staff:
Steve Anker, Director
Joel Shepard
Irina Leimbacher
interns/volunteers:
Brian Frye
Rick Danielson

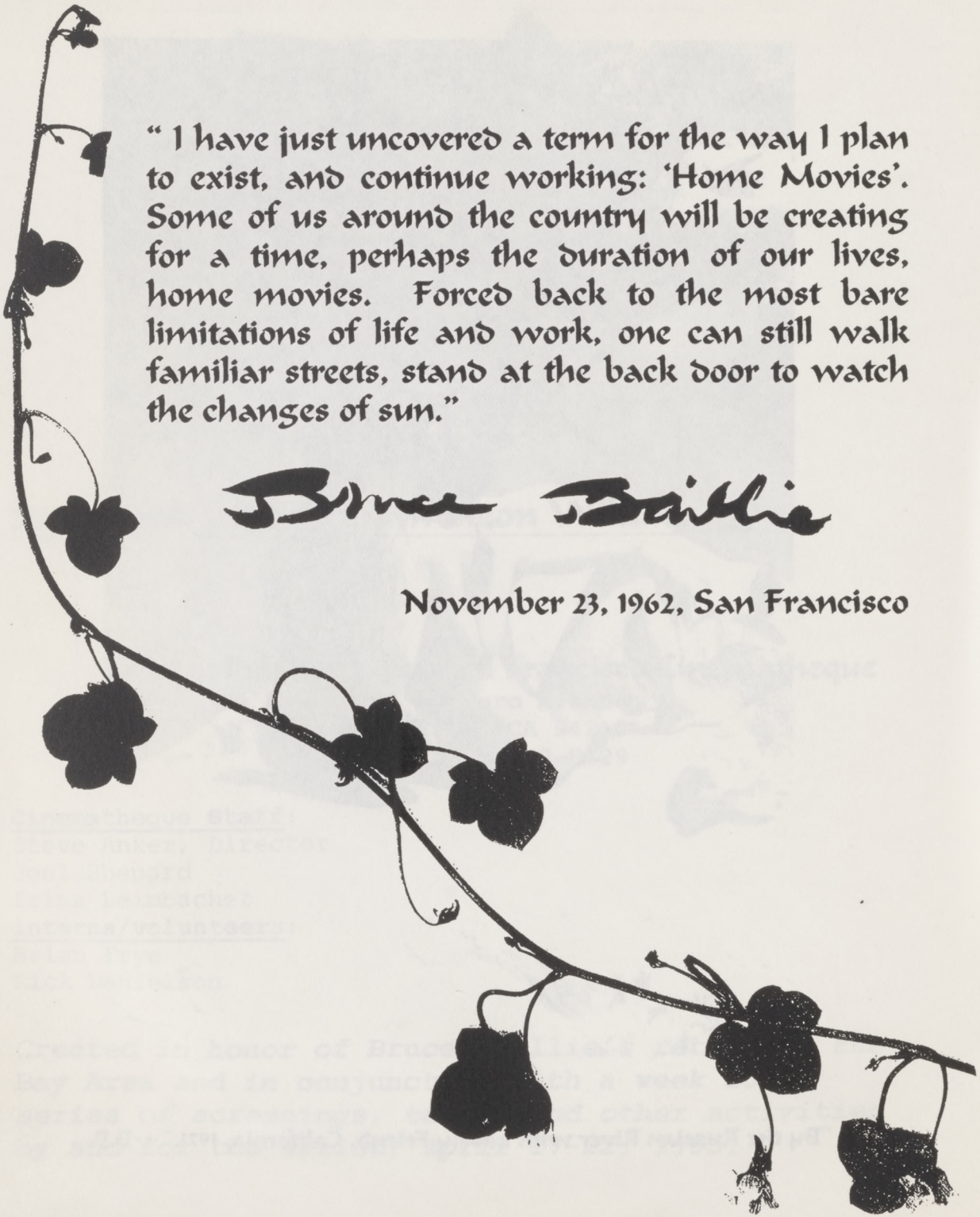
Created in honor of Bruce Baillie's return to the Bay Area and in conjunction with a week long series of screenings, talks, and other activities by and for the artist, April 17-22, 1995.

"By the Russian River with Lovely Friend, California, 1971." --B.B.

" I have just uncovered a term for the way I plan to exist, and continue working: 'Home Movies'. Some of us around the country will be creating for a time, perhaps the duration of our lives, home movies. Forced back to the most bare limitations of life and work, one can still walk familiar streets, stand at the back door to watch the changes of sun."

Bruce Baillie

November 23, 1962, San Francisco



A welcome return...after 12 years...

Bruce Baillie holds a special place at the heart of Bay Area film exhibition as the founder (along with Chick Strand) of Canyon Cinema, which was born in 1960 on a sheet in Baillie's backyard in Canyon, California. The eclectic screenings of films then continued in an anarchist restaurant in Berkeley, a private girls' school, the Coffee Gallery in San Francisco, Strand's house, and a variety of other odd and sundry places. The often tri-weekly screenings were enlivened by wine, popcorn, pillows, chairs borrowed from a nearby mortuary, and Strand and Baillie in costume collecting $1 donations (or IOU's) and raffling off their homebaked pies during intermission. These screenings subsequently led to the creation of a filmmaking workshop, the publication of *Canyon Cinemanews* (with Ernest Callenbach), the expansion of Canyon into an important, internationally recognized distributor of alternative film, and also the founding of the San Francisco Cinematheque which, as the exhibition component, split off from the rest of Canyon in the late 1970's.

Bruce Baillie has remained true to his art, life and vision of community for over 30 years. A profoundly spiritual man, Baillie seeks beauty in simple, honest moments and truths behind calcified habits. The films he has made are cherished throughout the world for their sensual lyricism and social critique, and in the last several years he has expanded his artmaking to radio, video, and literature.

The Cinematheque proudly welcomes Bruce Baillie with the publication of this scrapbook of photographs, journals, letters, and criticism. We hope it is a fitting compliment to his achievements as an artist and human being.

MASS FOR THE DAKOTA SIOUX

3/

Wind

d

I speak of
loving, or
landing, not
confusing the worlds.
One random, the
other infinite (which is which?).
Pervaded by —
Love I reveal sing
innumerable to the
winds.

Quote About Bruce Baillie

A lot of film-makers are ingenius, but few have Bruce's great and particular gift: what we might perhaps call an eloquent eye, the ability to capture and link images with a magical kind of grace that has almost nothing to do with dramatic form or "ideas". Although he made *To Parsifal* in an editing room in my basement, and I knew him well during the making of that and other films, I never understood the real source of his gift. But I marveled at it then and I marvel at it still. Maybe it has something to do with vibrating in the rhythms of the universe, a kind of optical dance to music most of us remain unconscious of.

At any rate, thanks, Bruce!

Ernest Callenbach
Editor Emeritus, *Film Quarterly*

THE GYMNASTS

Semi-narrative, partly documentary, my first film with "fancy" editing. Originally a "News," now in release.

--Bruce Baillie, *Film Comment*, Spring, 1971

Glendale Y.
1950.
St. Monica
Beach:
Sunday
fruit bowls in
Don Buchanan's room. Bob Barker and
his '40 Merc. coupe, chopped & channeled —
golf clubs in the rear, driver's seat only
(the first), small box of "health food."
Night out to see the thing - usherette
taken by Barker's beauty. Frightening
poor timid _____ in room ___ by mounting
a ladder outside his room & rocking him
wearing a hideous mask.

Al Greene at the desk with a pink English man's complexion & his narrow-shouldered green tweed jacket, coquettishly refusing me my mail - on & on - threatening to "tell Ernie"; the mgr.. Finally his gracious offering of an autographed photo; "my Hollywood friend, Roddy McDowell".

The WW II boys up on the roof in the sun in view of those surrounding hills yet unencumbered of housing tracts & the later insidious smog telling tales of the paratroops, El Alamein & so on.

And you know the story of Easter at Balboa Beach —

FOR BRUCE BAILLIE: CANYON CINEMA'S FATHER, MY DAD

(a reminiscence and appreciation)

Dear Son, Michael; Dear Big One; Dear Guy; Dear Bigness; Dear Big Guy; Dearest Big Boy--these are invariably how the letters and cards would begin. Following this would often be a series of musings on the state of the art (film/video) and the state of the world, both (inevitably) in a state of decline. Also included might be some minutiae pertaining to his financial condition and state of health, both precarious. Then there might follow some requests to help him obtain materials and equipment or a teaching or lecture engagement. Finally would come the suggestion of traveling together somewhere in the near future, usually Mexico, Thailand, the Phillipines, or some other far-flung locale. Then he'd sign off: --Dad; Love, Dad; Your Dad.

So began a tradition in the fitful, erratic correspondence between Bruce Baillie and myself that has lasted for many years. He became my "Dad", and I needed one, my first having died much too young, and unexpectedly, of a heart attack, when I was 23. And I became his "Son", an identity that seemed to serve Bruce in some way as well. Father/Son. Teacher/Pupil. Mentor/Protege.

But Bruce Baillie really has many sons (and daughters), having "fathered" Canyon Cinema into being thirty years ago. That tale (the sheet hung in the backyard, and so on) has been told many times, and has become part of the folklore of Canyon's history. Many filmmakers of my generation consider Baillie a seminal figure in the experimental film movement, or a significant influence in their own work. Newer generations are just beginning to discover his film poetry.

My own personal connection with Bruce Baillie was almost accidental. Between my sophomore and junior years in college (the summer of 1968), I decided to enroll in a film production course at the Mendocino Art Center in Northern California. I had already been exposed to an incredible array of film artists and their work (courtesy of P. Adams Sitney at Yale U.). I had seen *Castro Street* and was completely seduced by its power and grace. I was anxious to try my own hand at this novel art form. As it happened, the instructor that summer in Mendocino was Bruce Baillie.

I had never encountered anyone like Bruce before. He seemed to march completely to his own drummer, but what drummer was that? He seemed to be guided in his work and life by a powerful intuition connected directly to the land and to his senses. His communication reflected this: a seriousness about his art and purpose peppered with philosophical digressions and zen-like riddles. To a cynical, 20 year-old college hippie, Bruce's directness and lack of irony seemed odd, somehow old-fashioned. Even his humor seemed somehow of another era. yet he giggled like a little kid, and his obvious enthusiasm as a teacher was utterly genuine. Was he a wise man, or a fool?

My recollections of that summer are like brief snapshots. Bright, gray, overcast days casting an even, intense light. Bruce walking through the tall grass of the Mendocino coastal fields, his Bolex waving and looping through the air, seeming a natural extension of his arm, his body, his eye. I was stunned at the ease and grace with which he seemed to gather his images, his seemingly effortless technical proficiency--an immediate intuitive grasp of what he needed to film, an apparent sixth artistic sense. Yet it was difficult for me to really be myself around Bruce. I was intimidated by him, in awe of him, wanting his approval. My earliest films, shot that summer, strongly reflect his influence: lyrical, moody, elegiac, off-hand. I was just beginning to find my artistic voice, and borrowing/reflecting that of my mentor seemed perfectly appropriate.

Other snapshots: Bruce scaling a cliff (like a crab) from a bluff down to the ocean, his body a series of Tai Chi routines; Bruce naked, showering outside his cabin, casually surrounded by his horses and dogs; sitting at the wood table with Bruce and his girlfriend Charlotte eating green peppers stuffed with kasha. And the most memorable: pressing the button on the carefully framed and tripoded Bolex for section four of *Quick Billy*, filmed that summer. Baillie acting the Cowboy Hero in this section and needing a cameraman: Me!

That summer remains for me a turning point in my life. Since then I have changed and grown, artisically and otherwise. My sense is that Bruce Baillie has as well, though in a different way. He's simply become more firmly himself. I've often thought that he was born in the wrong century. The march of technical innovation and progress that has continued geometrically throughout the latter half of this century is meaningless to him. It matters little,and in fact is often a source of annoyance. Bruce moves at a pace that is slower, more considered, more reflective. For him, the train is a central icon, and reflects his concern that we experience, truly, moving from one place to another. Wasting time is not a concept that concerns him, for there is really nowhere to go and nothing to achieve. Except, perhaps, self-knowledge and a certain contentment that can only come from a truly engaged life.

> *"Try to avoid the politics of 'corrrectness' as you mature, grow, learn, work."* (B.B. to M.W., 7/11/92)
> *"So, as always, I would resort to poesy, rather than the blatant prose of the knobheaded and dullwitted."* (8/17/92)

I vividly remember a rather enormous papier mache bust, a giant head that resembled Uncle Sam co-habiting the cabin with Bruce and Charlotte, or sometimes residing outside as a sort of sentinel. Apparently, Bruce had found this figure in a costume shop in San Francisco at some point and had taken a liking to it. The outsized head had become a sort of mascot. Bruce held on to the figure; it would show up over the years in photos he would send me. Eventually, it seemed to me to develop a definite personality of its own, one which merged with Bruce and evolved into an alter-ego: Dr. Bish.

QUICK BILLY, REEL IV

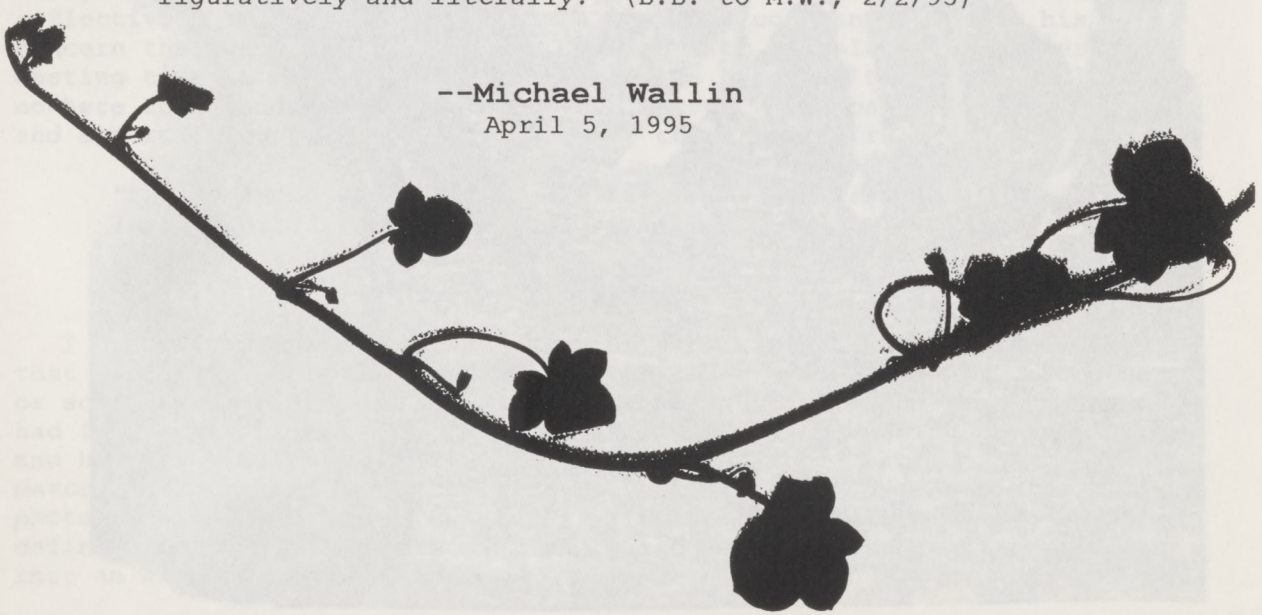
I spoke with Bruce recently and discovered that the Dr.(a "full-blown Ph.D.") was a character invented while Baillie was teaching at Bard College. Dr. Bish/Baillie's purpose, via a weekly newspaper column, was to defend the rights (of presumably disenfranchised students) and provide the "missing ingredients of academic life". As well, the Dr. was a vehicle to make fun of the entire campus scene, in particular its president ("What is Bruce trying to do to me with this terrible creature?!").

The Dr. Bish mythos became more elaborate: he had a sister in Kansas who was the head of the Women's Brigade; a wayward younger brother out west, Billy Bish, who won an award for the most promising sophomore; and finally the elder brother Maynard, evidently some sort of genius. Presently, Dr. Bish/Baillie hosts a "commuter radio show" in rural Washington where Bruce lives, providing helpful advice and sharing local gossip (and maybe recipes). Bruce had envisioned a TV talk show ("sort of a Johnny Carson thing") but the logistics proved too daunting.

All this is vintage Baillie; quirky, quaint, silly, fun, provocative. But above all, in his own stubborn, idiosyncratic fashion, it is an attempt to inject some sanity, freshness, vitality, and folk wisdom into the daily lives of the sleepwalking masses. Perhaps Bruce Baillie is an anachronism. If so, we could certainly benefit from more of his kind.

> *"'Even children have this problem', I wrote on receiving your letter; what problem? Loving, I guess--sharing, connecting--giving/taking, relating. It's all gone (modern society). Even children are lonely, even horses--isolated, alone, pastured, at best, if not entirely abandoned, out in the rain and the cold, figuratively and literally."* (B.B. to M.W., 2/2/93)

--Michael Wallin
April 5, 1995



Paul Tulley, 1962, in "Have You Thought of Talking to the Director?" -poet, close friend and collaborator in films written & not filmed as well as appearances in several works filmed, including "Quick Billy". --B.B.

1 FILMS OF STAN BRAKHAGE
AND 3:10 TO YUMA

2 THE FILMS OF LARRY JORDAN

3 THE KID
FILMS OF MAYA DEREN

4 RASHOMON
TO PARSIFAL

5 THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY
KNIGHT OF THE TRAIL
HIGH NOON

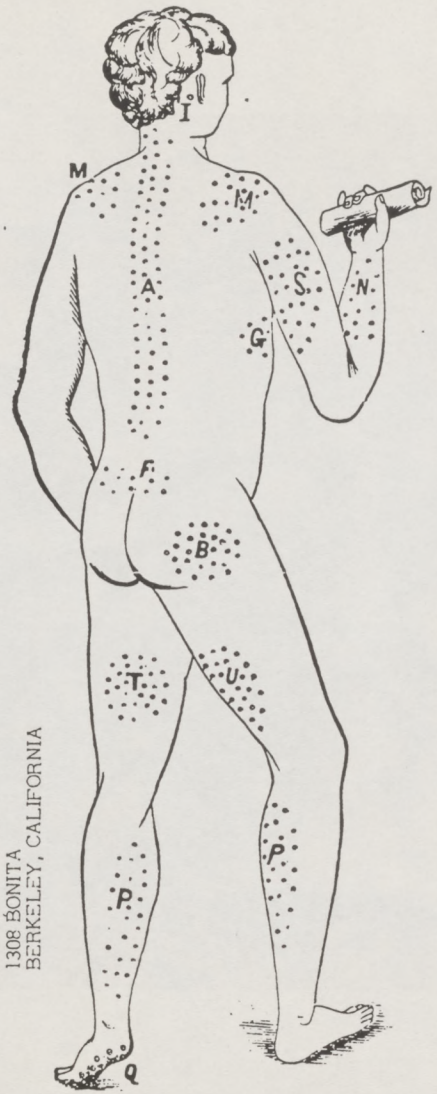
6 BROTHER ORCHID
CHRISTMAS CAROL COMMUN. SING
ALL WET

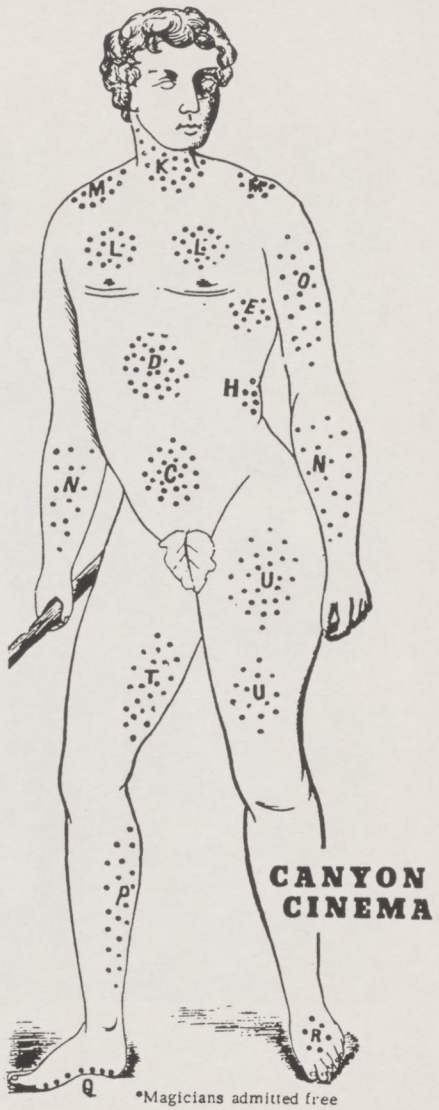
7 DREAM OF THE WILD HORSES
OLD CARTOONS
NEW EAST COAST SHORT FILMS

8 BLOOD AND SAND
MUD AND SAND

CANYON CINEMA

1308 BONITA
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA





*Magicians admitted free

An original Canyon Cinema program/flyer from 1963 featuring the model for "An Exothematic Method of Cure."

April 2, 1995

I haven't seen Bruce for eleven years, and even then it was only for five minutes. I was at Evergreen in Olympia for a couple of days. Bruce lived nearby in a trailer. There must have been some sort of distress connected with the college for Bruce, because as I was walking across campus in the evening, there he was, I think in his Jaguar. I didn't recognize him at all because he was in disguise with a blond wig on. It seemed as if the contact wasn't a part of our on going friendship, as if we weren't supposed to meet then, it wasn't in the cards, it wasn't our fate, it wasn't in the books, it wasn't time, but a glimpse as if we were entirely different people would be okay, almost out of time. Prior to that we hadn't met for maybe a dozen years. But it was as if, should we have wanted, we could sit right down and plan another several months of shows in the same old way. Of course we were leading very different lives by then. In those early years after we both had left Berkeley, when I was in LA and he in Mendocino, then Washington, we saw each other rarely, sometimes up north and once he came to visit us in LA. We would write. When he was at Bard, sometimes we'd talk on the phone. A couple of years would go by, the phone would ring, and it would be Bruce imitating Brando in The Godfather. We would continue the conversation we'd had during the previous contact, as if nothing had changed, and between us, it hadn't. Recently we write and talk more often, mainly about everyday stuff, the bathtub is falling through the floor, the guy is coming to fix it; going to the bakery to get old bread to feed the seagulls, and how angry the neighbors get that they are being fed, the guys down the street who are making noise in the middle of the night and the disadvantages involved in telling them to shut up; what's going on in the garden; talk about our children; what projects we are working on, but never much about content until the last year or so. We are comfortable in our friendship, both rather isolated, working alone. We have become the old farts. Although we have led very different lives, we haven't changed much basically. The same unspoken view of humanity which drew us together as friends in the first place keeps us close now, a faith in freedom and disgust for intolerance. May the little guy, the nobody, prevail.

The images; the dead poet/hero in the street, no comfort for the dying, the motorcycle, mother, you might as well mourn, the old Indian men in the coffee shop, the sheep on the hill in golden light, the sea, the photo of Bruce in his little WWI pilot's hat, playing bear in the house by the ocean, the hands on the guitar, Tung on skates, the fat man walking in the red zone, the woman in the forest,the train, powerful, the poetic power, the marchers, Mr. Hayashi, the still of a man and his dog, the fountain of wild red roses over a fence, rebirth. I have watched them over and over during the past twenty-five years, alone in the projection room. One can only "get" them by feeling them. Seeing them is simply heaven.

Love
Chick

Feb. 2, 1969

Dear Bruce,

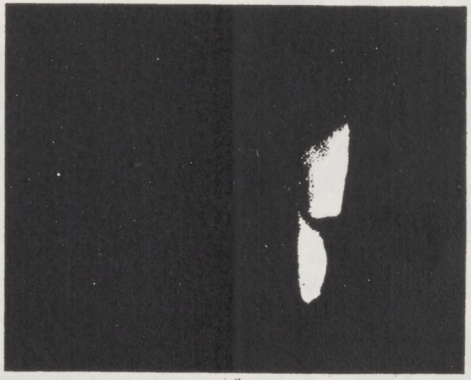
Well!... the 25 ft. of yr. roll 46 and the full 47 contain as perfect a weave of metaphorical harmony and supportive color tonality I've ever seen in film—and they *have* to, in order to carry the dramatic weight of yr. Uncle-Sam-like mask against the textures of the beach: you'd *never* 'get away with' that Bandmaster, this side of Surrealism, unless he operated in as tight a knit as you've composed for him... : but he(you?) is *not* Surreal—that's the miracle—nor the metaphors dramatically obvious, either.

First, you've an over-exposed—yet carrying yellow—beach piece upper left frame, answered/echoed by the dark blue rock-patch lower right... and in between?: a black chasm *which* seems to be seen thru white mist—the 'bleed' of beachlight, yet also evokes, or visses, green in some eye-expectancy tension between the yellow & blue. A man shadow begins its move across the beach piece: and into this *prepared space* you thrust the ghost white mask of Unc Sam in red band-master costume complete with gold braids, etc: (so prepared IS this space that I took the 'entrance' as a dissolve first several times viewing): the ephemeral white-over-black has reached, thus, and solidified over blue-black rock: the red coat answers green-under-black of chasm in a harmonic clash comparable to over-yellow & under-blue: and the gold braids & buttons shift us to the glints of textured sand just as the whiteface leads to the following foam-wash in a by-play still of the opening theme... over-yellow & under-blue—now played out as sand whitened over with sea foam AND dark-blue of water emerging in each backwash of foam: and the footprints are, of course, the beach at its most yellowish, echoing both the pizzicato of buttons AND some drift of the original diagonal chasm: and all finally moves, then, into a shimmer of grains, as in 'closed-eye-vision' and cuts with a chunk of over-yellow and, then yes, under-blue rock-drop. But Sam still 'sticks OUT,' does he not?—tho the mind has to rack back over the events to catch him...

... you resolve that, next roll, beautifully, starting with an electrick sunset (a bulb so photographed—in reflection?)—as to stand for electric-light/sunset synonymously... then a pan up the features of the mask transformed by the yellow bulb light and close-up textures as to echo the sand shots—but *more,* at least at first, to be-seem a landscape painting (for such a sun to set in), past lips (which settle it as mask but also, wonderfully, echo-in-shape the sun-bulb-set AND give us the red of some-such, as wld the sun—were it such), then settle on mask's eye (in a shot exactly evoking Mt. Rushmore's Lincoln): then you

shift along a line of yet deeper-red lines . . . still sinking yr. sun, as I take it . . . until block-white, echoing Sam's hat, fills frame except for the tiny grey idol, all backed by white sky, of a lovely girl—the full haunt of remembrance-photo grips all thought here . . . would pitch over into sentimentality except that you move, then, along a line of silver verticals (utensils) intersperced with, yes, red verticals and an echo-of-pix white-block (measuring cup): this shift to verticals roots the gray upstanding figure of the girl almost subliminally in mind: yellow-brown and wood-waved wall backs this continuing pan of kitchen utensils, carrying on the sand-and-water theme as surely as the white window-block you come to carries on pic./cup theme . . . (other colors coming in, now: but even outsides green, thru window, ONLY after introduced by a flower*pot*, etc: finally you *stop* this pan when you get a resolve of horizontal and vertical reds in an egg shaped fuzzy mass of red yarn *backed* by the dried rain-drops of the window—shift diagonally over yellow and then down wood's wavy grain to (what looks like) the remains of the supper you'd been having earlier (1st roll you sent me), picking up silver verticals, now, wherever you can, all the way . . . even leaving in a light-struck frame—as it fell, magically for you, in vert-streaks over first picture of yourself in mirror, wherein yr. ruddish face becomes the sunset (in a near perfect balance of red & yellow) struggling against the encroaching dark of yr. own movements.

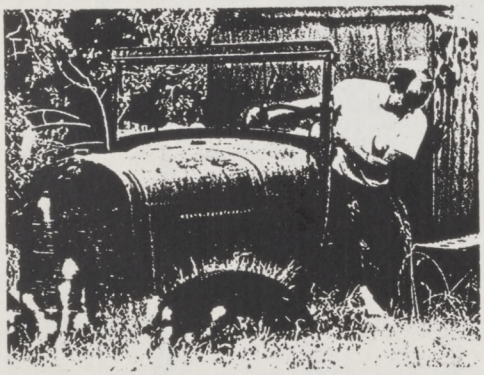
--Stan Brakhage
(from Brakhage Scrapbook)



Frame

Enlargements

from ROLL NO. 47



From top: "My Volkswagen at Pete Spellman's [I made all my films out of this car];" Morning Star home, 1965-66, where I made CASTRO STREET, ALL MY LIFE, and edited VALENTIN DE LAS SIERRAS; Bruce Baillie at Pete's. Summer 1969. [photo by Pete]

Castro Street is an immensely complex, multilayered impression of an industrial street in Richmond, Calif. (The name has nothing to do with Fidel--the Castros were an old Spanish landholding family in the San Francisco Bay area.) I know of no other film except *Deserto Rosso* in which this world—of plants and smoke and railroad cars, of large buildings without human scale, of heavy machinery, of huge and heavy objects that are being processed yet never seem quite real or finished—is handled with such delicacy. For *Castro Street* is not one of those awful smug adolescent attacks on Industrial Ugliness--most of what we see in it has a shimmery beauty. Nor is it a paean to the drama and power of the Great Factory. It is a kind of modest, scrupulous sense record of a particular section of our contemporary lives--condensed and clarified and yet "expanded." It has a sinuous, shifting rhythm, more gracious than the sprung rhythms in *Tung*--and woven in with an exceedingly complicated soundtrack, composed like music but made up of sounds recorded live on the street. It was my impression, on the occasions I saw Bruce when he was making the film, that he spent even more care and time on the track than on the picture side: recording with a Uher, then mixing and re-mixing on the three-tape-recorder sound rig he has permanently mounted and connected at his editing table. (It is characteristic of him that these are decent machines--two Ampexes and a Viking--not the borrowed and defective recorders too many people try to make do with; and it is also characteristic that he bought them in the days when he--and his dog--were mostly living in a Volkswagen and spending virtually nothing even on food, so that every penny could go for the films.) The result is extraordinarily subtle: a texture of sound that, although one seldom makes precise connections between individual noises and individual images, is still somehow all of a piece.

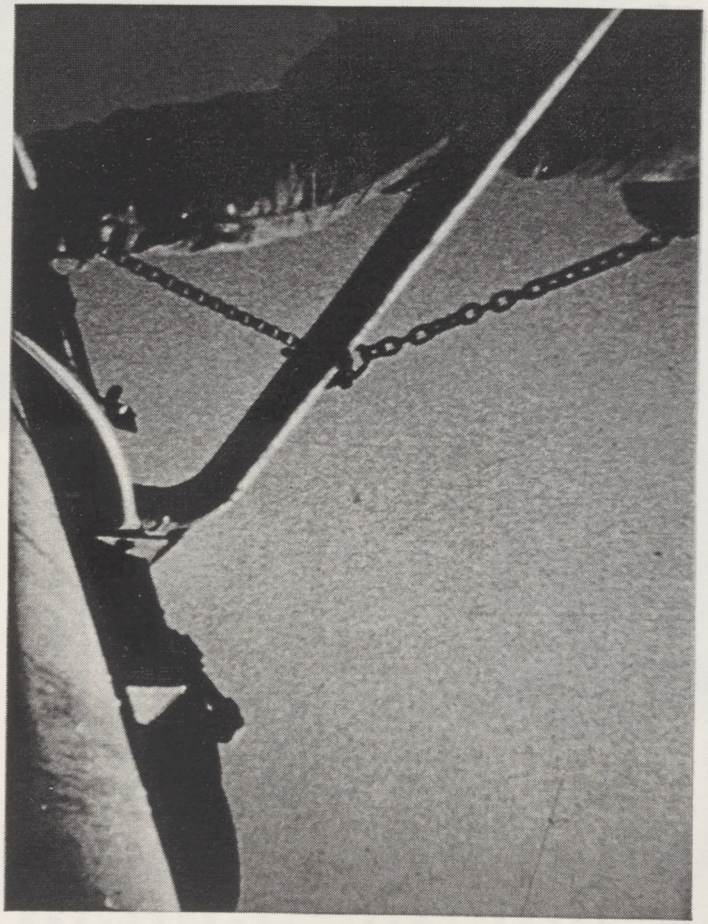
I don't think the film is "saying something," even in the indirect, understated, highly personal way in which *Mass* or *Quixote* are criticisms of what our lives have become in this country. Its sheer loveliness is more reminiscent of *To Parsifal*--a film which has only perhaps an emotional drift, like the water that appears in it so beautifully. *Castro Street* seems to me a kind of pure suspended form: it is just there. Nothing in it is accidental, yet everything in it is casual. Nothing in it is "realistic," yet everything is real. And although many of its images were shot through prisms or soft-focus devices, what it does above all is to bring home that the gently floating, colored shape of a freight car shifting across the screen is as valid as a documentary image in wire-sharp focus, and perhaps rather harder to do well.

Sometimes, when I look at current films by young would-be-experimenters, I suspect we have already passed the point foreseen by Norman Mailer (in Berkeley for the first great protest against the war, the original Vietnam Day) when he noted that in LBJ's future society, "*Camp* gave way to *Shit* . . ." I admire some of the film-makers who cleave to our excremental chaos, and out of it create satire or a wild anarchist beauty. I laugh my head off at Conner or Vanderbeek or Nelson like everybody else. But I think it is harder (and to my puritan soul this makes it more valuable) to do what Baillie and Jordan Belson and a few others are trying to do: salvage out of the chaos things that have mystery and emotional importance enough to warrant an artist's care and devotion. In an age of Pop, this may be a rearguard action. But *Castro Street* will remain an interesting film, I suspect, when the current fads and many that will follow them have run their course and vanished.

--ERNEST CALLENBACH

from *Harbinger* 1, July, 1967

STREET



CASTRO

Sometimes I wish VALENTIN would move a little bit slower, about another half pace slower. It's odd, I suppose I didn't really know when I was so close to my subject that he would move a little bit faster through my screen. That film came out of the painful experience of one making a record of his own life. I remember that the strength of my impressions daily there was so severe that I really thought I couldn't live through it. It was being a foreigner, being an outsider by choice; even the horse rejected me down there, I couldn't take his picture. It, being the last film I've made, led me or at least indicates where I feel I'm being led, and that is into an essential question about recording. Whether it's a distinct action from those actions you make according to just being, and not being a recorder of being, or the concern with creating another being. That is, I am talking about being an artist, a vehicle through which something flows and is one thing and then another; or I don't know that, but at least it flows through and all the particular pain from that flow was really at a peak when I was in Mexico. I still saw myself as a recorder, so I sought to make a thing from being in this extreme environment and finally, after a number of months in the same town, behaving myself, I couldn't stand it anymore. I saw a girl on a horse and I looked all up and down the street for her, risking hanging, and finally found her aunt's house. I mean I felt that there in that environment—you probably have some feelings for her from being there and seeing the film—that public execution was a risk that I was running by asking. But I asked her and then I had a meeting coming up with her father, Manuel. I was afraid and it was about three days to go when I was going to meet him on a corner at night. I had never seen him and I wasn't going and a little boy came to the house and said he was waiting. So I went to see him and I just said the thing that I had said many times, just learned to say, that I made movies and there would be an exchange of money to the family because they were poor, for my being able to be part of their family, allowed into their house at least. They lived behind a wall with the horse. I wanted to sleep at night on the girls' floor and photograph them through the cracks as they woke up. I never got that far but that's how I felt. I was completely, erotically, totally, taken with Mexico and there was no way out. I had found that to make films was the way out. Now I'm looking for how to stay there always. I haven't found how to do this yet. Neither in or out, but just *there*, something like that. Instead of making the transit, making way, instead of depending upon a vehicle, instead of having a weapon at my command, a thing between, instead of thing-making to get there. So, in Mexico I began to shoot, using an extension tube with my Bolex and the three-inch lens, skin, the vibrations in the wooden blocks, and the ground, and the sun coming up through the blocks, and the blood flowing down there in the earth. And the sun was so intense I would have thought that the images would be more light. They were so heavy. But then I deliberately bought Kodachrome down there and kept it pretty low. Like I say, I wish it were a little slower, absolutely all of it, by a fourth. The game, *Loteria*, the girls were playing—we used to play with the girls every night on the street corner—the game is the kind of game that's like a whole family, where playing lottery at night is a kind of nightly reassurance of the whole story of being alive, with all the animals, the sun, the elements, all on the cards. We'd play it every night.

Well, anyway, so that game was in the middle. The sync part was kind of astonishing to me technically, since I was jaundiced at the time and probably shouldn't have been working. That's all I had to do was that sync passage, maybe a minute and a half, and there were two passages within it. I didn't have a sync outfit down there. In fact, I had to borrow a very bad tape recorder.

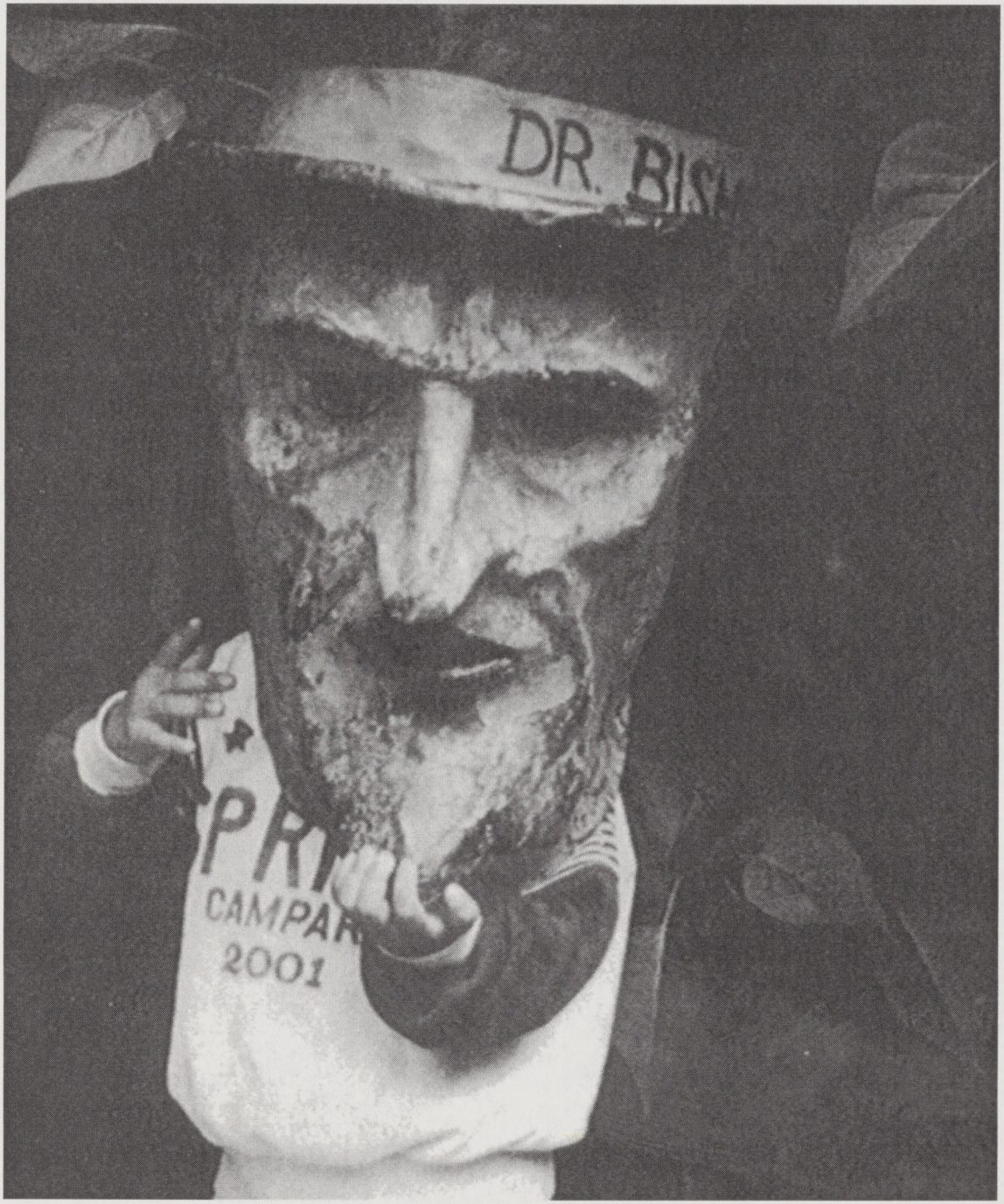
Is VALENTIN *your favorite of all the films you've made so far?*

Well, I kind of liked it. I named my horse after that film. I'm still stuck with a kind of primitive view of my existence—like horse, home, woman, man.

--B.B. from *Film Comment*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring 1971 (an interview recorded at the 1969 Flaherty Film Seminar)

VALENTIN
DE
LAS
SIERRAS

Above: *A Hurrah for Soldiers*
Right: Archie Jewell Cradick, Deming, New Mexico, 1965
Quixote.



Wind Baillie as Dr. Bish.

BAILLIE'S USE OF LIGHT: A READING OF HIS NOTEBOOKS

By Anthony Bannon

A divine power works in this mind and body and it is the same that works in all men, minds, plants, things — the whole world as an equal instrument of a divine action and gradual self expression.

— Bruce Baillie's Notebooks, June-July, 1970

"...to not be attracted to dull light, nor afraid of intense light. Abandon habitual propensities; be not weak."

— Bruce Baillie's Notebooks, quoted from the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*.

"More light!" declared Goethe, moments before he died, and, for its life-touching ambiguity, the poet's two-word command has persisted — a cultural legacy. It has continued to live in the memory of man because light is the sign of divinity and the natural sign of energy. Light is the spark which, through metaphor, illuminates truth and is the vehicle for beauty. It is light which makes vision possible, and in its honor we speak of the inner light and enlightenment — we see the light — and those who are heroes are called luminaries.

The most noble activities of the mind and its most grand abstractions are described with the word "light" or with the word "sun," light's source. For instance:

Plato - "light of reason."

Christianity - "The True Light."

Zoroastrianism - "We sacrifice unto the undying, shining, swift-horsed Sun."

Hinduism (*Bhagavad-Gita*) - "Suppose a thousand suns should rise together into the sky: Such is the glory of the Shape of Infinite God."

And — also from the *Bhagavad-Gita* — an augur of the dream-image effect of film —

"The Atman is the light:
The light is covered by darkness:
This darkness is delusion:
That is why we dream."

Buddhism (The Tibetan *Book of the Dead*) - "The Clear Light of Reality" perceived upon death is the "Infallible Mind of the Dharma-Kaya," which is the state of "Perfect Enlightenment," or Buddhahood, "The purest and highest state of being."

More than any other American independent film artist, Bruce Baillie's use of light suits the metaphors given to the word. Others, such as Stan Brakhage, have employed light for its own filmic ends and explored its use with unique vision. But Baillie's work, unlike Brakhage's, employs light, especially high key situations, to express transcendent or spiritual concerns. Baillie's notebooks and study of the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, two works from which he has acknowledged influence, provided supporting documentation for this essay.

While most articulately realized in *Quick Billy*, the West Coast film artist's sense of light as a vehicle of transcendence is expressed in nearly every film. With the exception of several documentaries, Baillie's work may be seen as a heroic journey, seeking through movement, light and discovery the liberation provided by propitious re-birth in the next moment — if not in the next world or state of consciousness.

"I want to see everything I can see — good things in nature and people," he wrote in his notebook, June 1, 1970.

And a fragment from July 7, 1969 — "...to become freer — to become innocent (freedom, through consciousness to innocence again beyond the circles of birth and death)."

If Baillie's spiritual concerns remain in question, an examination of the following should clinch conviction:

An undated list of life tenets, from the June-July 1970 Notebook —

"1. Consecration of all works.

2. Renounce attachment to [illegible] of works — or transformation of egoistic will.

3. Egoism (yields) divine purpose. (Origin of desire)."

And from the (undated) summer of 1966 — "I depend on God to put me into the next environment — on which I spend my life energy. He depends on me to do the job. *I* make films, after all. *He* made me."

Baillie's notes are the cursory works of a man thinking things out. They shouldn't necessarily be taken as clear-cut explications of his work, but, more reasonably, as leaders to a general point of view. They suggest that one may view his work as expressive of a concern with the temporal discovery that leads to a spiritual justification.[1]

Indeed, Baillie himself wrote to Brakhage (and to himself in the journals) that his work exists "beyond art," as a tool for self-discovery, i.e., from Sept. 28, 1969 — "Film is the discovery, rather than the reaching of a goal." Or — (July 18, 1969) "I question my art. I am so thrilled by the unexpected. The mysterious combination of things — I want to enjoy these relationships of the universe now. Art itself is much a part of this universe — but the making of art, for the time being, is like a prison to me."

Baillie's film journey to right living takes him through place (*Castro Street*), heroes (*To Parsifal* and *Quixote*), ritual (*Mass for the Dakota Sioux*), psychodrama (*Have You Thought of Talking to the Director*), structure (*Still Life* and *All My Life*) and lyricism (*Tung*).

Each film is marked by high key situations of light, often through deliberately burnt out sequences, as in *Mass*; shots into the sun, as the bursts of light breaking dark footage in *Valentin*; composing with large areas of sky dominating the frame, as in *To Parsifal* and *All My Life*; sequences with highly reflective surfaces, as the shimmering walls in *The Gymnasts* and *Have You Thought...*, and, in color films, a hot saturation of colors, as in *Quixote, Castro Street* and *To Parsifal*. Additionally, the re-occuring image of an eye, symbol not only of vision but a sign of divine core, re-emphasizes his spiritual concerns, appearing in *To Parsifal, Quixote, Valentin* and *Quick Billy*.

That the use of light (also movement, sense of discovery and ritual) has been an integral concern of Baillie in resolving matter-spirit polarities throughout his career may be illustrated by more closely examining an early film, *On Sundays*, and his latest work, *Quick Billy*.

In the former work, a girl climbs a hill in suburban San Francisco, playing briefly with dogs.[2] She is headed toward an old house, which, with its many windows and doors, suggests a rite of passage, a means for discovery. Both the young woman and the house often are shot heroically, the frame dominated by a luminous sky.

The house is a mystifying place, fraught with potential for external and internal discovery, its walls scrawled with graffiti, an archeology for future visitors. And a mirror is hung there for reflexive vision.

Shortly, the girl becomes frightened and sees a man, silhouetted in an over-exposed, magically shimmering doorway. Unprepared for the consequences of discovery, she runs through the house, past equally shimmering windows, and out, returning to town, her movement having been foreshadowed and continued into the future of the film with repeated images of a trollycar.

Later in a park, the young woman observes a crowd gathered around a man delivering a religious speech. A sign proclaims "Devil is cruelty and hate. What are you or me? God is love"—and there are images of birds and a fountain, suggestions of renewal.

Significantly, the young woman again sees the man she earlier fled, and instead of again rejecting him she joins him on a journey through commonplace locations, images however rich with implication: An occasion of popular nourishment (popcorn in Woolworths), a ritual of wine exchange with hoboes, a judgement (physical examination of the woman by the bums, the least of men) and finally, a mythic, purifying placement of the woman, like statuary, upon a bar table.

Partly horrific in its manipulation of the woman, the film suggests, nonetheless, the rigors of purification later articulated in more complex fashion in *Quick Billy*'s Part II and III journey through an after-death state, where man experiences the threats of the Wrathful Dieties—"thought forms," Jung suggests, "which appear as realities."[3]

Not only is Baillie's poignant use of light particularly appropriate to film (as Brakhage[4] pointed out to Baillie in a letter about the latter's work in *Quick Billy*) but also appropriate to the medium in his aspiration to abstraction, nearly always attained at the expense of narrative particularity. The symbolic use of light and darkness is one of the basic factors in mythic thinking, where, in Ernest Cassirer's words, "the bursting forth of light out of darkness is the one original phenomenon."[5] Babylonians believed that the world was created in imitation of the sunrise, and that notion is echoed in the Biblical myth of creation. Indeed, the interchange of day and night—light and darkness—underlies the basic notions of space and time: Primary aspects of structure signified by diurnal changes—off and on, yes and no, light and dark. And in its rhythmic presence, observes Cassirer, there is found "a never-ending sequence of becoming."

Vision, writes Hans Jonas, "with its extended present of enduring objects, allows the distinction between change and the unchanging and therefore between becoming and being... Only sight, therefore, provides the sensual basis on which the mind may conceive the idea of the eternal, that which never changes and is always present."[6] The power of the moving, manipulated image has a tremendous evocative power. In the hands of an artist such as Baillie, it leads to a belief which overcomes reason. It performs what man rarely achieves: Restructuring space and time.

On Sept. 14, 1966, Baillie's only entry in his journal was the following: "It gets to be that everything you do is wild and sacred."

Two years later, he began work on *Quick Billy*, a wild and sacred movie. One way to look at the movie is in terms of the relationships it establishes between:

The artist and the world outside himself (natural environment, animals, women);

The artist and himself (dream images, non-representational shapes, mysterious figures, a diary-form sound track and archival images from his past);

And between the artist and his medium (images of Baillie shooting film, sound of him discussing what "will be in" the finished film and a final reel showing the artist as performer in an Old West sequence assembled in the style of early American silent cinema).

Another way to see *Quick Billy*, a way which builds from the above, is as an imagination of the archetypal symbols of the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. Baillie's notebooks from 1967 to 1971 are rife with references to "The T.B. of D." and to its vision of man seeking re-birth in the symbolic *Bardo* state, a state following death during which one is confronted with the options of existence in the void of Buddhahood or in a variety of re-birth forms. The notes, such as the one which follows (from Nov. 11, 1969), refer to the spirit, if not the substance, of the Buddhist holy book.

"...the one moment (of reality-release/freedom-through animality ('one's nature')—fear of taking those 1st steps—away from ('one's nature'—innocence*)—away from the only *known* (*seeming*) reality - sensuality, the fiercely possessive and unstable - nature of *the beast* the illusion of reality (phenomena) the trip (that is to say - the parade of *karmic* imagining which is the result of the shadow of reality - the other face of - the unmasking of - our deeds - our doing - our becoming - the awful mask of revelry - sadism being only an extreme demon of the normal search for pleasure - which is the universal search for wholeness/holiness or liberation (Buddhism)."

The parentheses are not closed in his text. The punctuation is Baillie's. The asterisk refers to the following: "*Toward a conscious union - again - with innocence, this 'fusion' is called *liberation* or being."

Baillie's notebooks also indicate a separation according to reels in *Quick Billy*, the first reel to "the Peaceful Dieties" of the *Bardo*, the second to the "Wrathful Dieties," the third labeled "birth" or "re-birth" and including a "persuit, judgement, flame ...sex, dreams, heroes and 8 mm theater" to demonstrate "primitive (childish) innocence" and in the fourth reel, "actors, in fact, self, becoming children."

The notebooks also suggest the possibility of color coding, by reproducing the color symbols of the Tibetan Book:

Water - blue, white - principle of consciousness - navel
Earth - yellow (touch) (root)
Fire - red - feelings, heart
Air - green - volition, throat.

While *Quick Billy* is no mere visual translation of the *Bardo*, the *Book of the Dead* does provide many clear links to the film. For example, the following lines from the introduction of the Tibetan book (which describes a "Pure Truth" experience) also are a lyric expression of the first images in *Quick Billy*:

> ...subtle, sparkling, bright, dazzling, glorious, and radiantly awesome, in appearance like a mirage moving across a landscape in springtime in one continuous stream of vibrations... From the midst of that radiance, the natural sound of reality, reverberating like a thousand thunders simultaneously sounding, will come. That is the natural sound of thine own real self.

The beginning sequence of the film also provides a direct color linkage to the first three days of *Bardo* existence. In the film, the first color seen is the deep blue of the leader, next a brilliant white light of the sun shot out of focus, gradually turning yellow at the peripheries and breaking into three distinct areas.

Likewise, the first three days of the *Bardo* are represented this way:

On the first day, "the whole heavens will appear blue," from which *Bhagavan Vairochana* (source of all organic life) will appear, "white in color and seated upon a lion throne." On the second day, "the pure form of water will shine as a white light," and on the third, "the primal form of the element earth will shine forth as yellow light...glorified with orbs having satellite orbs of radiance, so clear and bright that the eye can scarcely look at it."

After establishing a close association with the radiantly fearful but peace-giving lights of the Buddha, the first reel continues with associations established in the first several minutes, such as the lion which brought *Bhagavan Vairochana*, images of the sea and land, shots dominated by the sky (heaven), the horse and jewels of the third day Buddha form and variations on the original color theme, with sounds generally peaceful.

The second reel suggests the Wrathful Dieties of the eighth through 14th day of the *Bardo*, "flame enhaloes, wrathful, blood drinking dieties come to dawn, who are only the former Peaceful Dieties in changed aspect." The colors of these dieties are dark, as is much of the second reel, and they make horrific noises, as does the sound track of Reel II, the beginning section of which is dense with *Bardo* associations—shadowy apparitions, flashes of light from a darkened frame, bones.

The latter part of the reel especially suggests the *Sidpa Bardo*. If the dead person has rejected the pull of the Peaceful and Wrathful Dieties, he must travel through this intermediate stage, seeking a re-birth. During this stage, the person "will see places (familiarly known on the earth-plane) and relatives as one seeth another in dreams... There will be a grey twilight-like light" and one will have illusions of being "persued by various terrible beasts of prey." Additionally, one will be confronted by "smoke colored light from the hell world," and will have visions of "males and females in union." And there will be a judgement, where "the lord of death will say, 'I will consult the Mirror of Karma.'"

Animals—bears, snakes, lions, tigers, the eye of a creature—inhabit the second reel of *Quick Billy*, and a long scene is shot through the smoke and heat of a dump. The sound here is often clangorous, and, when verbal, it suggests the self-doubt of one unable to recognize the "bright void state of thine own intellect." For example, this passage heard over images of a snake:

"I'm not capable of anything. Why? Why? Why?...I'm not the guy to wind up in that kind of a lion's pit. What the hell am I doing, see. I'm no fuckin' bum. I'm an intelligent person, and I can't understand it, see..."

The Judgement—Baillie sadly looking into the mirror of the camera preceeded by images of a shrouded person fleeing at night—appears in Reel III with a long sequence of intercourse and 8 mm superimpositions of home-life followed by a sequence of what Baillie refers to as "cock suck."

The fourth reel, having little to do with light or the *Bardo*, releases the film from its introspection, externalizing its maker and releasing him from further deep revelation with the evasive, mock heroic words, "Ever Westward, Eternal Rider," ever Westward to new discovery, to new work, as suggested by the four final unedited 100 foot reels, to new "frightening brilliance."

"Frightening brilliance," he wrote July 16, 1970, "the sun, the ocean, the stars, the flame, the green jewels emanating rainbow, the parade of dieties, frightening surely, rarely encountered during normal experience..."

And from later that same day: "The woods when I am alone is peopled with the radiant dieties of my own being, frightening me."

This is man, as he termed it Sept. 17, 1969, "stretched between heaven and hell" engaged in "flirts between 'good' and 'evil.'"

It is also a man who wrote (Nov. 11, 1969): "Do you know what rainbow means? It is a family. That is, a sparkling radiating spectrum of light, which comes from within, pure delight (pure light) projected out into the world—containing all those beloved members of one's inner family—springing from that one center of joy."

NOTES

1. This synecdoche is best expressed in *Valentin de las Sierras* a short Baillie film using as image-source a Mexican family. Stylistic elements in the film such as extreme close-up composition, high contrast lighting and energetic camera movements, encourage a part-for-whole reading. More than any other of his films, *Valentin* directly illustrates Baillie's excitement with discovery of abstract, life-assenting qualities emerging from mundane, daily perceived objects.
2. Baillie's recurring interest in animals suggests another motif in his work, a pan-concern for living things and an articulation that all created things are unified in a web of interaction.
3. Appearing in the foreward to the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* (p. xlviii), compiled and edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Oxford University Press, 1968.
4. Brakhage wrote Baillie on Jan. 15, 1969, after having seen a reel of *Quick Billy* footage: "You, as I, seem to be taking strong advantage of film's most unique possibility—preservation of the track of light in the field of vision..."
5. *Mythic Thought in the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, by Ernest Cassirer, Vol. II, (New Haven, 1955), p. 96.
6. *The Phenomenon of Life*, by Hans Jonas, Dell Publishing Co. (New York, 1968), pp. 144-45.

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A Rare Adventure in the filming of
QUICK BILLY

...an International group of dedicated artists functions as a team in recreating a cinematic saga of the Old West

(Acknowledgement to Herb A. Lightman, American Cinematographer Magazine).

THE DYEING OF THE GLOVES FOR THE CHAPEL SCENE.

One problem on location was simulating the black leather gloves used initially by the character Ben (subsequently lost) in filming the demanding "Chapel" sequence. The material finally decided upon were a pair of white editing gloves and two pints of Black Silk Stove Polish. Adhering to the principle that Billy is both real and imaginary, medieval and timeless, we personally fell in love with the substitution.

Dwight Camis, our Production Designer, attempted during the dyeing process to achieve the desired white fingernail effect by having his staff cut small masking tape pieces which were then applied to the gloves. The results were negative, however: Once again, Max Factor's #15 saved the day!

The sequence creates a stunning effect of a fairytale tapestry brought to life on the screen, but it took a bit of doing. Adapting to this situation (the resultant foggy conditions), rather than cope with the crane on wet ground. Dwight was ecstatic. Wayne likewise. -bb

from Canyon Cinemanews,
issue #68-8 (1968)

SEEING

I THOUGHT

HER BRIGHT SHADOW

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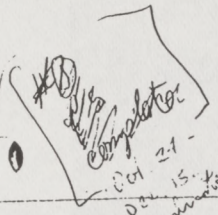


Oct. 24
Morn

Hello

First moment I've had to sit, at last, write. Mondays complete this morning - I had planned on this morn. to get off the first chapt. of -- The Laundry Letters !+ Ah well, will find time tonite or tomor.

Navy bean soup & crackers, a nice day. New tyres (Br. sp.) a moment ago - Les Schwab's. Wind set. to school, we missed bus. Second-hand in my old Japanese batt. clock caught the main* Chapt. D: In the Laundry Lesson: hand & she ceased ticking in the night (dreamed I was caught in a fundamentalist convention of some awful sort). Love due →

2/ 9 A.M., at "Nancy's") A rather sad lady, it seems, who cares for her elderly mother. Flew over much of the island, incl. a lovely old beach house where Lorie is spending the day at #7 on Iron. With our usual Laurel & Hardiners we took over an [illegible] to locate the place — [illegible] delirs. Wind [illegible] started between times, then set to our search for Nancy's. Remarkable running out of petrol. Finally about we found the right house. Exciting. I was accosted by the desconcerting, "Can I help you?!" A lady in pajamas w. a fairly delightful 11-yr.-old daughter, admiring my explorations across (her) remote terrain.

Made it, you might want to know (no one else is supposed to), to the "Playa" — taking

deliberate time now, refueling - purchasing STP for the car, checking oil, cleaning windshield, then side & rear windows, using a few paper towels, checking oil - leaving most of the flu sides from 2 days before spitting out of window. Observing various folks observing me: "Who am I to them?" "Who shall I be —?" etc.

Fishwife w. fries! Mostly mush.

Return bus to erase tartar sauce. "I didn't ask for tartar sauce."

Flats! Discovering a nail in our tyre — thus the latter end of the venture.

A few notes back through the last two days:

Bloody smokes.

~~Two~~ Two days ago, if I can recall. Cannot.

I do recall Lorie admonishing me about my demeanor in public. Last eve at the Chinese rest. for ex, an old American couple allowed for ex, have become fixed, ~~their~~ is it fixated, on our table. Actually, on us I suppose, Would like made up while driving as a Blue Jay. I was wearing my Charles Bronson outfit. Lorie was looking helpless (Go back to China!, they may have been thinking). And of course I ~~talked~~ talked to the illusion, whatever it wanted to be, fueling possible preset imagery.

Lorie + Wind

A lovely thing. Like those lengthy phone recorder notes. Leading the mind, as in ~~Waiting~~ A standoin / A standoin theatre, nowhere in particular — especially nowhere in particular. through ~~Dan~~ sorrow & lament, perhaps, onto greener pastures — no conclusions no resolutions, not a note of truth — or at least fact.

Always: mournful, even hopeful rights (of loss). Days, forever, a marvelous illusion, at the least. Where is the confirmation from ~~the~~ blessed Light when the woke mind is ~~this~~ cast into darkness? (See P-38).

This morning once arisen from the ~~[illegible]~~ tomb of night, brings its miracles: Stopping to phone Nancy in our miniature Keystone chase scene, I was overwhelmed, gradually, by the sight of useless service station refitting — great trucks, men, tar, ~~[illegible]~~ concrete, machines & ~~[illegible]~~ terrifying ~~[illegible]~~ great loads of wiring — a lovely, smaller man — well set up, as they sort of Peter Lanford playing a Br. major.* Obviously a former local wrestler, now husband & worker — perhaps 38, neat mustache. & much better Clark Bronson than I.

* EXODUS

Backing around, I came
upright. Backlit, the steam
rose from the new concrete in the
cold of October a morning - the
ageing athlete & non-labourer had lent
a ready hand & steady eye (. Jack London).
It was incredable. Resurrection, another
reaffirmation! Do you see?

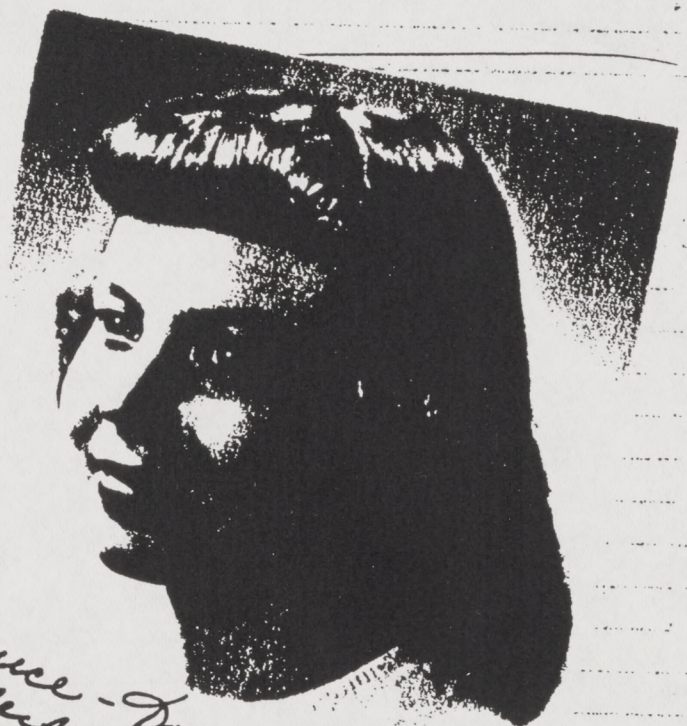
And now in the with warmth &
certainty of this light (Light!) I return
on my new Les Schwalbe tyres to take a
shit & then a nap. At four I
must be up to meet the school bus
- last we spent the debacle of
last wk. which brought
out the very f bad mothers
in force, with their frowns
pre-set frowns &

/

their long brown stockings. (Oh why am I not accepted by the other housewives, Kevin?)

"For we who seek Perfection—"

legs. the housewives - & the auto parts & typing & concrete workers - creds.



Bruce - To a wonderful guy, I appreciate you & your work. Love, Sarah

A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST, OVER THE WIRES

I first "met" Bruce Baillie by telephone just a few weeks ago. My first thoughts were, here is very kind man...here is one of the Greats who has managed to transcend the affected artist-pose of so many of his peers
...here is an artist who makes time.
And he is a pleasure to talk to...could listen to him for hours on end if it weren't for the phone bill. Not only does he weave a mesmerizing history, his present day life is no less ripe with anecdotes and sublime searches to fill the hours. Because no detail is too small to a poet like Bruce...all is equal...all is good for a laugh, even when it's deadly serious.

What follows is the piecing together of several of our conversations by memory and through my stream of thought during and after the conversations. A kind of memory interview.

* *

Picture: Bruce Baillie at home, this sometime late March of 1995, feverishly (or perhaps calmly) splicing workprints from 20 or more years past in preperation for his visit to San Francisco (the first in a long time--10 years maybe). There's almost four hours of it he says, none of which anyone has seen outside his home. (I'm thinking immediately--Kodachrome prints--with those over saturated phosphorescent globs of red...)

Picture: Bruce Baillie of Camano Island, Washington where he lives in a modest house with wife, Lorie, and their young daughter, Wind. Is it really an island I ask, thinking isolation... not really Bruce tells me--it's more of a springboard to a whole series of nice little islands of the north Pacific outside of Seattle. And the neighbors keep to themselves pretty much, it being an upstanding community and all...Except yesterday when the guy next door interrupted Bruce's splicing to address the grave issue of whether or not he "had been in my house". Why no, I haven't,replies Bruce with a subtle air of tranquility. "Well...do you have a key to my house?" (the neighbor continues as though it weren't the first time they had ever spoken) ...No...sorry, I do not have a key to your house..."Then what about your wife...maybe she did it..." No, no I don't think so...now the

tranquility turning to amusement in Bruce, and the neighbor, visibly frustrated, turns to leave on a Final Note: "Well, I can tell when someone's been in my house, rearranging my things!". Bruce recalls he looked like Mr. Rogers, cardigan and all. And I wonder just what is it that attracts such wanderers, searching for some answer hopelessly obscure to them, in Bruce. Is it because he's one of the original wanderers who has learned to love the obscurity of it?

Back to splicing. All of these workprints have been sitting in several trunks at his house for years. On top of the trunks a collection of stuffed animals had accumulated, but now the animals have been moved off as he edits. Bruce has an admitted understanding of the importance of his work for many of us fellow film people, not in the conceited sense, but as a plain perception of reality. Lorie and Wind, no doubt affected by Bruce, have an equally plain perception and are beginning to wonder (with some impatience) when all these smelly, dusty reels of celluloid are going to disappear so that the animals may again inhabit their usual home.

Last year, during a trip to the Phillipines, Bruce contracted dysentery. He was, literally, at death's door for a time. The recovery has been full by now, full enough for him to reminisce about the Phillipine people's views on Americans (artists in particular). In the place they stayed (which is also where Lorie comes from) the relatives and friends in that community know little, if any, English. But they do have a universal hand symbol they use whenever they encounter Americans: it stands for the dollar sign. They all think Americans are on "pensions" Bruce says. When Baillies visit the Phillipines, they barely had enough money for food, yet everyone assumes that, since they're American, they should be giving out money. Some people from the Baptist church payed a visit to the Baillies, asking for a donation: Bruce gave them 100 Pesos, which is equivalent to $5 US Dollars. They were positively insulted, Bruce said, because even the people who are dirt poor give more money than that to the Church. The word of this insult spread throughout the community. The Baillies "never heard the end of it". In more communicative situations, which are few, Bruce finds himself in the throes of obscurity once again. In the Phillipine people's understanding of Americans, Bruce is a "rock star from Hollywood"; these are the only possible permutations on the terms "film" and "artist". If only they knew, if only it could be explained I'm thinking...but Bruce is roaring with laughter at this story, and I'm starting to laugh too...seeing that it is what it is. And Bruce says it's very good to laugh at things like this, because very few artists can do that these days.

Back at home, Bruce admits that even Lorie has "no interest" in all his film work. (I think, how could she not be interested ...) But it seems the relationship runs on a different kind of steam... Still, Bruce sometimes gets excited and forgets, like the other day when Lorie was going to the store just as he found a reel of film he shot in Aspen many years ago--hurry back so you can watch this with me, he asks,

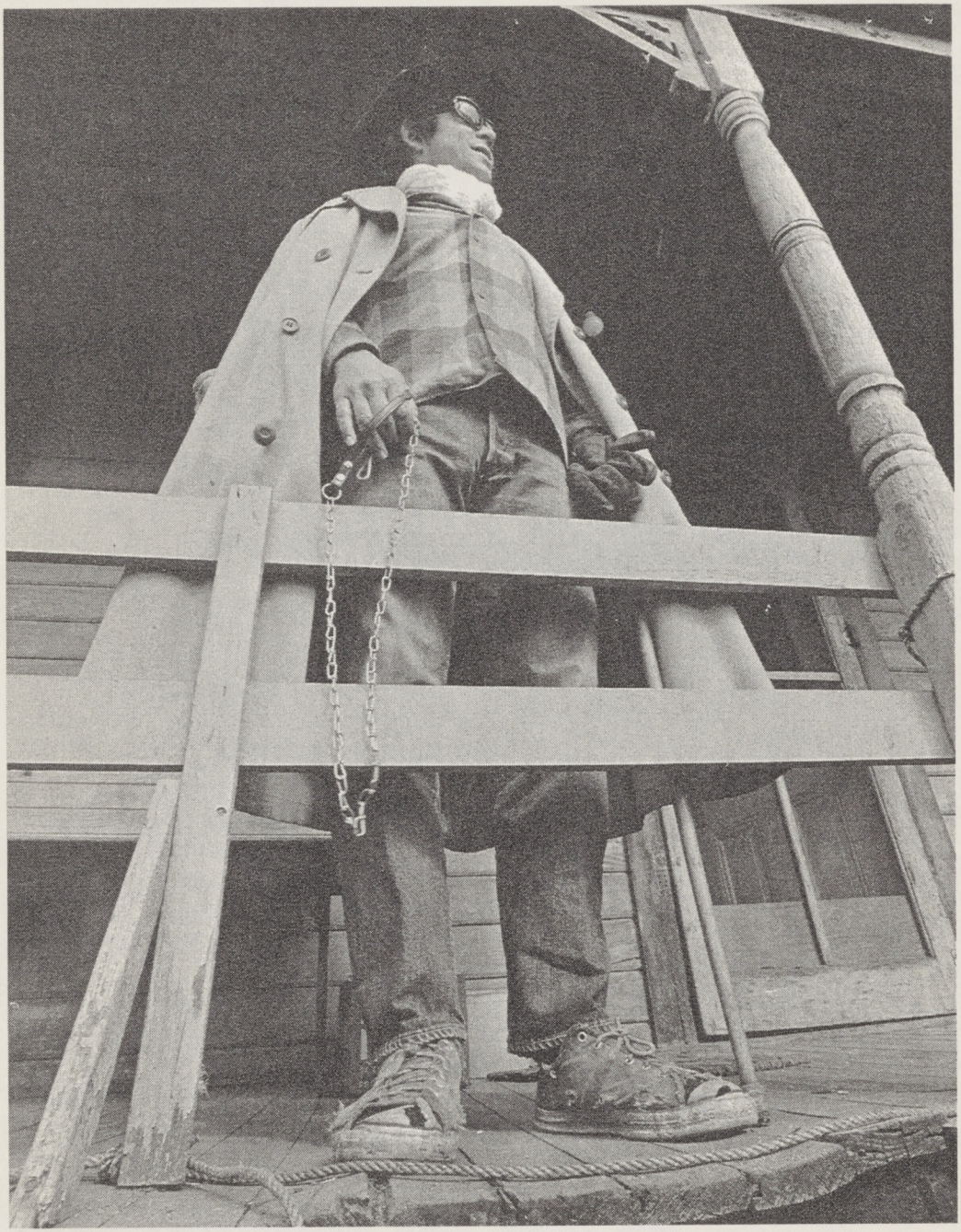
I haven't seen it in twenty years...but his request is met with a polite "No thank you". Apparently, there is a basketball game on T.V. which Lorie much prefers over a Bruce Baillie film. Even when upstaged by a basketball game, I'm marveling at the idea of Bruce, a true bohemian who doesn't need the ego support of other "bohemians" to stay happy and know what's what.

Bruce recently received a purchase order for a print of Castro Street from the Univ. of Tennessee. The order was made out for $450.00, a price from the now defunct AFA catalogue. Bruce sent a letter of reply saying that he would really like to charge them $550 or $600 because "times are hard...and it is, after all, a work of art...but if you're poor, $450 is OK..." Some months have passed with no further response, and Bruce is considering sending them a film can with a toy rubber snake coiled up inside. I suggest, how about a live snake...

On the subject of the film and video mediums, Bruce has laid bare some of my presumptions. For one, he is noticeably devoid of argument, bitterness, and absolute statements. This is the Bruce Baillie who makes video and is a film maker, ever-ready with the original Bolex close at hand, should the opportunity come his way. This is a filmmaker who gets excited when I tell him they still make 16mm Kodachrome, and that I am shooting it when the opportunity comes my way. Despite the communication problem, Bruce greatly admires and enjoys the Filipino spirit: it reminds him of the spirit of the early Canyon days, which is saying "what do I have" and not "what don't I have"--as in the principles of Haikido--"if your opponent grabs both hands from behind, you think--well he doesn't have the use of his hands--and I still have my feet--so I can kick him in the shins!"

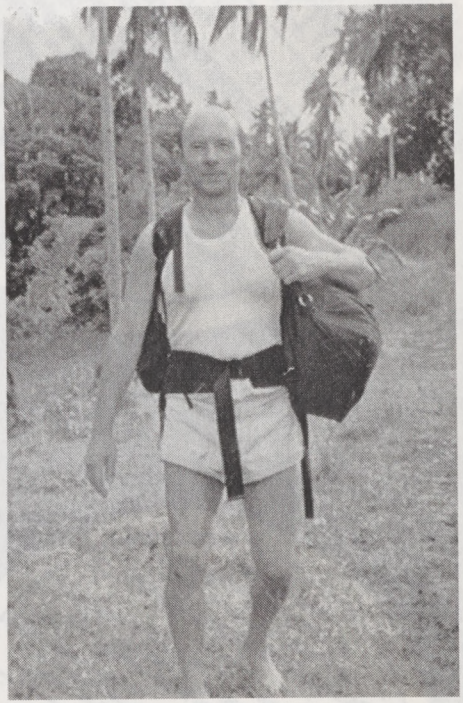
The burdens of the bitter and broken Great Avant-Gardist of the sixties never took hold of Bruce. Yes, I think he should be shooting Kodachrome today, and maybe I'll buy him a roll when he's here, for the pleasure of it. And I'll watch those workprints and the four hours of video he's also bringing. There's no argument when the bile is gone, things are what they are, and an obscure grey area is a comfortable place. All the whiners should think about that every so often. And laugh at their predicament...

—Tinodeon Wilkins
April 13, 1995



Bruce Baillie in Roslyn, Wash. (1972) as "Il Direttore",
the film in progress "Roslyn Romance"

Bruce Baillie



Bruce Baillie would like to dedicate his week in San Francisco to the Sunshine School for homeless children in Ho Chi Minh City....

Not Disconnect any Head or
Tail Leaders, nor re-arrange this
film in anyway Doing so will be
considered damage and you will
CANYON 5 CINEMA
Baillie: "CASTRO STREET"
ATTENTION PROJECTIONIST!
Please clean gate thoroughly before threading film and check
for correct loop; proper sound level; picture squared on
screen and in focus.
Please rewind film on original reel
and tape leader before mailing!
The renter is responsible for unnecessary print damage.
Thank You.
CANYON CINEMA COOPERATIVE
2325 - 3rd Street, Suite 338
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 626-2255
COOPERATIVE
CANYON CINEMA
Baillie: "TUNG" 24 fps silent
ATTENTION PROJECTIONIST!
Please clean gate thoroughly before threading film and check
for correct loop; proper sound level; picture squared on
screen and in focus.
Please rewind film on original reel
and tape leader before mailing!
The renter is responsible for unnecessary print damage.
Thank You.
CANYON CINEMA COOPERATIVE
2325 - 3rd Street, Suite 338
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 626-2255
COOPERATIVE
CANYON 2 CINEMA
Baillie: "ALL MY LIFE"
ATTENTION PROJECTIONIST!
Please clean gate thoroughly before threading film and check
for correct loop; proper sound level; picture squared on
screen and in focus.
Please rewind film on original reel
and tape leader before mailing!
The renter is responsible for unnecessary print damage.
Thank You.
CANYON CINEMA COOPERATIVE
2325 - 3rd Street, Suite 338
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 626-2255
COOPERATIVE
CANYON CINEMA
Baillie: "A HURRAH FOR SOLDIERS"
ATTENTION PROJECTIONIST!
Please clean gate thoroughly before threading film and check
for correct loop; proper sound level; picture squared on
screen and in focus.
Please rewind film on original reel
and tape leader before mailing!
The renter is responsible for unnecessary print damage.
Thank You.
CANYON CINEMA COOPERATIVE
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San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 626-2255

Bruce Baillie

FILMOGRAPHY

16mm Films

1961 ON SUNDAYS 35 minutes, B&W
DAVID LYNN'S SCULPTURE 3 minutes, B&W
*MR. HAYASHI 3 minutes, B&W
1962 FRIEND FLEEING 3 minutes, B&W
*THE GYMNASTS 8 minutes, B&W
EVERYMAN 6 minutes, B&W
NEWS #3 3 minutes, B&W
HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF TALKING TO THE DIRECTOR? 14 min., B&W
HERE I AM 10 minutes, B&W
1963 *TO PARSIFAL 16 minutes, color
1964 *A HURRAH FOR SOLDIERS 4 minutes, color
BROCKFIELD RECREATION CENTER 6 minutes, B&W
*MASS FOR THE DAKOTA SIOUX 20 minutes, B&W
64-65 *QUIXOTE 45 minutes, B&W & color
1966 *YELLOW HORSE 9 minutes, color
*TUNG 5 minutes, B&W & color
*CASTRO STREET 10 minutes, B&W & color
*ALL MY LIFE 3 minutes, color
*STILL LIFE 2 minutes, color
*TERMINATION 6 minutes, B&W
PORT CHICAGO VIGIL 9 minutes, B&W
*SHOW LEADER 1 minute, B&W
1967 *VALENTIN DE LAS SIERRAS 10 minutes, color
67-70 *QUICK BILLY 60 minutes, color (78 min. with rolls)
1974 *ROSLYN ROMANCE (IS IT REALLY TRUE?) 17 minutes, color
(Intro I & II)
1971-
present ROSLYN ROMANCE: THE CARDINAL'S VISIT 90 min., color
(in progress)
1977-
present DAY ASHORE, 90 minutes, B&W (in progress)

Videotapes

1987 *DR. BISH REMEDIES SHOW #1 55 minutes
*DR. BISH REMEDIES SHOW #2 55 minutes
1990 *THE P-38 PILOT 15 minutes
1995 COMMUTE

Baillie currently has numerous 16mm and video projects in progress.

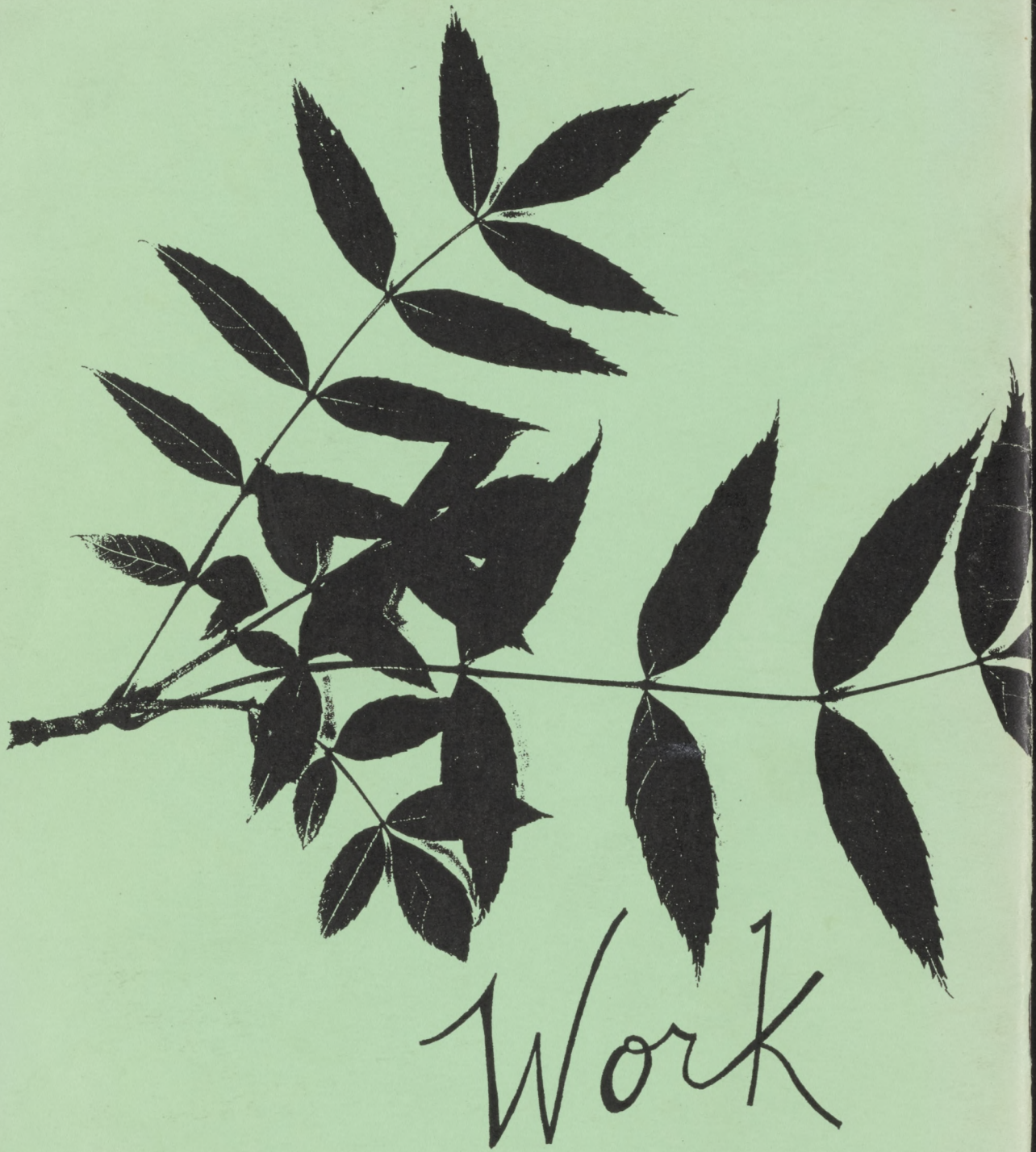
Also currently in progress, a book: "Memoirs of an Angel". For a complete abridged excerpt from above concerning the author's own account of the birth and early days of Canyon, see *Canyon Cinemanews* #95-1 available from Canyon Cinema for $2.
***Indicates availability through Canyon Cinema.**

TOP-FLIGHT
PILOT

Did she "sit under the apple tree with anyone else"?
That's always been the question for a P-38 Pilot. Fastest
chair in the air, Lightning
in the clear teen-age hot-rod heads of
10,000 Marin County boys,
most never to be men, and
apples, always for Americans
cold from machines in late-night train stations going
back
to bases up and down the coast. The
seats finally armoured to protect those precious
star-spangled sperm, so
one more generation of deluded children
could carry the burden of
speed and death
to whom it may concern and
our sincere regrets.

P-38 nothing like it,
before or since, and
now
there's one staked down in the deserts,
where lizards watch it and no bands play.

Paul Tulley
6-26-90


Work